

January 7, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Christine Chilcott, President
Social Service Human Relations Board

Subject: Social Service Human Relations Board Statement of Need Regarding the CDBG
Public Services FY 2020-2021 and the Five-Year Strategic Plan



As an Advisory Board created by the City Charter reporting to the City Council, it is the role of the Social Service Human relations Board (SSHRB) to assess and report the social service needs of Alameda's residents and to establish strategies to address those needs (AMC Section 2-11.5). SSHRB carries out this duty by conducting a comprehensive citywide assessment every four to five years to ascertain Alamedans' most critical community and social service needs. SSHRB also organizes public meetings with stakeholders to help guide the prioritization of those needs.

In 1997, the City Council tasked SSHRB to participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process by reviewing and commenting on residents' public service needs and forwarding recommendations to City Council on the CDBG Non-Housing Public Services funding. As an entitlement jurisdiction, the City of Alameda receives CDBG funds from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, and one of its provisions is to gather stakeholder input on housing and community development needs and prepare a Five-Year Strategic Plan that will inform funding decisions in the next five years. The Five-Year Strategic Plan is updated yearly by holding public hearings to identify current needs and priorities and develop an Annual Plan.

To facilitate the community's participation in the needs assessment and CDBG stakeholder input-gathering process, staff from the City's Community Development Department and the Alameda Housing Authority conferred and conducted a short, three-question survey to review, reconfirm, and prioritize the top 10 community and social service needs of Alamedans from SSHRB's 2017 Community Needs Assessment. Respondents also had an opportunity to describe other needs not included on the list. A total of 44 surveys were completed. Results of the mini-survey were presented at SSHRB's November 21, 2019 special meeting. In addition to the mini-survey, Alameda Housing Authority staff also presented the Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice that was recently conducted for Alameda County with input from jurisdictional staff and Alameda stakeholders. The SSHRB November 21, 2019 special meeting was widely publicized. The public, service providers, and interested individuals were invited to attend and comment on the social and community service needs and priorities for Alameda.

The presentations and comments from the public updated the Board on the status of services currently being provided to residents of Alameda and identified emerging issues that need attention and possible gaps in services. This letter represents SSHRB's feedback on the following priority needs of Alameda residents for social and community service support:

- Affordable housing
 - Encourage HUD to increase number of Section 8 vouchers
 - Encourage and incentivize more landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers
 - Increase the supply of affordable housing
- Fair housing
- Tenant/Landlord mediation and counseling, tenant's rights, and housing support
 - Provide affordable tenant's rights/legal services

- Increase protection for renters
- Food security and food services
 - Increase access to healthy, affordable foods
- Homelessness services
 - Provide shelters, showers, storage, day center, restrooms, mental health, and housing navigation services
 - Develop housing options that include rapid rehousing, permanent support housing, independent housing, etc.
- Mental health:
 - Increase services available for low-income people and for all ages
 - Address stigma about accessing services
 - Address youth anxiety and depression
- Safety and anti-crime programs
 - Increase programs to keep the community safe
- Transportation/shuttle service and pedestrian safety
 - Better bus service, accessible transportation
 - More crosswalks

Rising rents and the high cost of living are continuing to challenge many of our residents in Alameda. The needs of our citizens are outpacing the resources available to meet the basic necessities of Bay Area living. The CDBG Non-Housing Public Services funding provides an important safety net that supports Alameda's most vulnerable populations, but it is modest. Prioritizing the needs identified by Alameda stakeholders is therefore an imperative, and leveraging other sources must be explored.

SSHRB, therefore, recommends that the priority need areas of affordable housing, fair housing, and transportation, which are of high importance and high cost, merit their own attention for planning and funding. Specifically, SSHRB recommends that fair housing services be funded under CDBG Administration. Transportation, shuttle service, and pedestrian safety are best addressed in the *Active Transportation Choices* planning process that is currently underway. SSHRB understands that the Housing Authority of the City of Alameda is actively addressing the affordable housing issue by providing affordable housing, administering the Housing Choice Voucher Program, recruiting landlords to offer affordable housing units, and offering incentives as allowed by HUD. Nevertheless, affordable housing is a regional and statewide issue, and the City of Alameda must continue to find ways to support the housing needs of its residents with low and moderate means.

Alameda's compassionate, strong, and resilient community is what makes our island city unique. The Alameda Housing Authority will present the Five Year Strategic Plan and its funding recommendation for the CDBG Public Services for Fiscal Year 2020-21 in the spring of 2020. SSHRB recommends that the City Council make policy and funding decisions that prioritize the needs of the people that have been identified in this needs statement letter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Christine Chilcott, President
Social Services Human Relations Board